

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION - NO 11 - GREENLAND AND THE
FAEROE ISLANDS

REF: COPENHAGEN (A) 3186 AND (B) 0049

SUMMARY. ELECTIONS FOR THE FOUR NORTH ATLANTIC SEATS IN
THE DANISH PARLIAMENT (TWO FROM GREENLAND AND TWO FROM THE
FAEROE ISLANDS) ARE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW THE NORMAL PATTERN
IN RECENT ELECTIONS WITH EACH OF THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES
RETURNING ONE MODERATE AND ONE MORE RADICAL MEMBER. THE
POLITICS OF THE DANISH NORTH ATLANTIC DEPENDENCIES IS
SOMEWHAT MORE LEFTIST ON BALANCE THAN THAT OF METROPOLITAN
DENMARK AND THE OVERSEAS MEMBERS, CONSEQUENTLY, TEND TO FAVOR
THE SOCIALIST BLOC IN PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS IN GREENLAND AND THE FAEROES
HAS BEEN IMPORTANT IN RECENT YEARS BECAUSE THE BALANCE OF
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POWER AMONG THE VARIOUS BLOCS WITHIN THE FOLKETING

(PARLIAMENT) OFTEN DEPENDS UPON A ONE OR TWO SEAT DIFFERENCE. IN SOME INSTANCES, A SO-CALLED "NORTH ATLANTIC" MEMBER HAS THUS DETERMINED THE BALANCE OF POWER FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. AS A CONSEQUENCE, POLITICAL INTEREST IN THESE ELECTIONS IS INCREASING SHARPLY IN THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES; IN GREENLAND, FOR EXAMPLE, POLITICAL PARTIES ARE BEING FOUNDED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

2. A NEW ELECTION LAW IN GREENLAND HAS ABOLISHED THE PREVIOUS NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN ELECTORAL DISTRICTS AND FORCED CANDIDATES TO RUN THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY. ON THE OTHER HAND THE NEW LAW PERMITS CANDIDATES TO RUN IN ELECTION ALLIANCES, OR IN PARTIES, IN A PROPORTIONAL ELECTION SYSTEM. TWO ELECTION ALLIANCES HAVE THUS FAR BEEN FORMED, A LEFTIST, MILITANTLY NATIONALISTIC ALLIANCE WHICH HAS CLOSE RELATIONS TO THE SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY IN DENMARK AND A MODERATE, CENTRIST ALLIANCE WHICH SUPPORTS GRADUAL EVOLUTION TO HOME RULE FOR GREENLAND. THE NEW LAW TENDS TO FAVOR THE ELECTION OF ONE CANDIDATE FROM EACH ALLIANCE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE INCUMBENT LARS EMIL JOHANSEN WILL BE RE-ELECTED FROM THE MORE RADICAL ALLIANCE. FROM THE MODERATE ALLIANCE EITHER KNUD HERTLING, FORMER MINISTER FOR GREENLAND IN A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, OR THE INCUMBENT NIKOLAJ ROSING, A NON-PARTISAN MEMBER, IS EXPECTED TO BE ELECTED.

3. THE ELECTION IN THE FAEROES HAS BECOME INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS THERE TO FORM A LOCAL GOVERNMENT. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE NOV 7 FAEROESE LAGTING ELECTIONS (REFTEL A) THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, THE REPUBLICANS AND THE PEOPLES PARTY HAVE AGREED TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT. WHO WILL FILL THE CABINET POSTS AND, PARTICULARLY, THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP IS NOT YET DECIDED SINCE THE CHAIRMEN OF TWO OF THESE PARTIES ARE CANDIDATES FOR FOLKETING SEATS. ERLENDUR PATURSSON OF THE RADICAL-LEFTIST, NATIONALISTIC REPUBLICAN PARTY IS EXPECTED TO BE RE-ELECTED TO GHE FOLKETING WHERE HE IS NORMALLY ALLIED WITH THE SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE FAEROES, IS RUNNING TWO CANDIDATES, THE INCUMBENT JOHAN NIELSEN AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND CURRENT FAEROESE PRIME MINISTER, ATLI DAM. ELECTION TO THE FOLKETING WOULD BOOST THE LATTER'S CHANCES TO REMAIN AS PRIME MINISTER (IN WHICH CASE NIELSEN WOULD TAKE HIS PLACE AS SUPPLIANT); IT COULD ALSO GIVE DAM A GRACIOUS MEANS OF RETIRING FROM THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. THUS, THE FINAL COMPOSITION OF THE NEW FAEROESE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DELAYED PENDING THE OUTCOME OF THE CURRENT ELECTION.

4. ALTHOUGH PATURSSON AND ROSING HAVE USUALLY OBSERVED THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICE OF NOT VOTING ON LEGISLATION DEALING EXCLUSIVELY WITH METROPOLITAN DENMARK, THE OTHER CANDIDATES PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY ON ALL MATTERS. THEY TRADE OFF THEIR VOTES FOR PROMISES OF SUPPORT ON TERRITORIAL MATTERS. GIVEN AN ORIENTATION OF FAEROESE AND GREENLANDIC POLITICS WHICH IS MORE LEFTIST THAN THAT OF CONTINENTAL DENMARK, THE SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE THE USUAL BENEFICIARIES OF AT LEAST THREE OF THE FOUR OVERSEAS VOTES.
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